

QUEER & TRANS SEXUAL ASSAULT: A YOUTH ISSUE



Santa Barbara
RAPE CRISIS CENTER

**CENTRO CONTRA LA
VIOLACION SEXUAL**

more than rape, not only crisis.

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Supported by Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center**

Introduction

I sit down to write down my experiences, using my own voice, all formalities dropped, and for me this is the most terrifying section to create, mold, or write. I can no longer stay disconnected and speak of things in general terms. I guess the time has come for me to take that leap.

Graduation day was by no means the happiest day of my life. I would have much rather skipped the tedious ceremony and the hundreds of pictures that followed. I could quite happily have walked away from my high school without posing with a fake smile for all of those photos with my “friends.” Though it wasn’t all bad I suppose. As I sat in my chair amongst the four-hundred and fifty three other graduates, and felt the cheap yellow gown stick to me as I acquired a sun burn, I had time to reflect upon my four years in this place that had become so familiar. My identity has shifted and changed drastically in my years at this school; I have come to view myself very differently than on my first day of high school, when I got horribly lost and accidentally used the “men’s” bathroom (little did I know).

Today I identify openly as queer, though I don’t like to specify. It has only been recently that I have been redefining my gender identity and recognizing that the binary-gender system is ridiculously constricting and truly a whole load of crap. People at school know that I’m queer in regards to my sexual orientation. I came out during my senior year. Looking back over the last four years I see that I was stuck in a trap of lies for the first three years; lies to myself, lies to others, and lies that where pounded into my mind from the instant I entered the world. As I began to break out during my junior and senior years, change came fast and hard, my seemingly strong relationships and friendships changed instantly after years of static. I found myself detached and groping for connection that seemed nonexistent in the halls of a high school. Indeed, the ally section of this zine is much about venting so many things that I

have wanted to ask from supposed “allies” in my life but was unable to do so. Whether it be standing aside while my identity was taunted, disparaged, and made nothing more than a joke, or whether it was watching two girls hold me down and kiss me as I struggled to get away, my “allies” were not there. Instead of their outraged voices speaking out in my defense, I heard only the laughter of all of my “friends” surrounding me. And then I had to return to school, seeing those who hurt me, hearing jokes continually made about it, feeling even more isolated, attacked, and violated.

I did however manage to find support though not from within the school system or from my own peers and classmates. I found connection, community, and support from people who I would come to consider my chosen family. The love and friendship that they showed me is what I envision everyone being able to supply each other, feelings of worthiness, feelings of love, and the tools to create personal empowerment and strength. I wanted to create this zine as a tool for queer and trans survivors of sexual violence, who are so often ignored and forgotten, to have their stories and voices heard. I also hope to awaken some allies who can have the strength and knowledge to truly support the queer and trans community.

Terms to Know

Vocab created from resources from Just Communities, Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center, and Pacific Pride Foundation

Sexual Assault: any unwanted sexual contact. Sexual assault can be physical, verbal, or visual. Examples include rape, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and stalking. Sexual assault is about power & control!

Perpetrator: a person who commits sexual assault

Survivor: a person who has experienced any form of sexual assault

Sex: The “biological” or “chromosomal” sex of a person. This can be considered our “equipment or plumbing” of a person. (XX for females, XY for males). Sex can also be defined by a person’s hormones (estrogen and progesterone for females, testosterone for males); and our internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, vagina for females, penis and testicles for males).

Gender: Society’s set of roles, values, and expectations for what it means to be a girl/woman or a boy/man in a particular culture. This can include the way we dress, act, talk, and generally move through the world, usually dividing our society into the categories of “masculine” or “feminine.”

Intersex: About 4% of the population can be defined as “Intersexual,” or born with biological aspects of both sexes to varying degrees.

Sexual Orientation: An identity based on who we primarily develop emotional, romantic, physical, and sexual attractions, desires, and fantasies for and connections with. It is who we fall in love with.

Gay: A male-identified person whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions and connections are with some members of the same gender. This term is sometimes used more generally, to refer to anyone who is attracted to people with the same gender identity.

Lesbian: A woman-identified person whose primary emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions and connections are with other women-identified people.

Bisexual: A person whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions and connections can be with both men and women to varying degrees.

Asexual: A person who does not form meaningful, emotional, or spiritual connections with other people but who does not experience these feelings in a sexual or romantic way.

LGBTQ: People who self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (Q also sometimes refers to “Queer”). A term of inclusion that seeks to capture all sexual and gender minorities.

Queer: Originally a derogatory label used to refer to, intimidate and offend lesbian and gay people. More recently, this term has been reclaimed by some lesbians, gay men, bisexual people and transgender people as an inclusive and positive way to identify all people targeted by heterosexism and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Transsexual: A person whose biological sex does not match their gender identity and who, through gender reassignment surgery and hormone treatments, seeks to change their physical body to match their gender identity.

Transgender: An umbrella term that can include transsexual, transgender, genderqueer folks, crossdressers, and just about anybody else who does not feel that their assigned sex represents their gender. A person whose self-identification challenges traditional notions of gender and sexuality.

Genderqueer: A genderqueer person is part of a group of people who do not feel that they fit into the traditional two-gender or gender-binary system. As with any other groups that may be aligned with transgender identities, the reasons for identifying as genderqueer vary.

Hir/Ze: Gender neutral pronouns used instead of him/he or her/she.

Questioning: A person who is unsure of, or is re-examining hir previously assumed sexual orientation or gender identity.

Transitioning: The process that a transgender person may go through after deciding that they want to live as a gender other than their birth sex. This may include change in dress, pronoun preference, or name.

Ally: Someone who supports and stands up for the rights and dignity of individuals and identity groups other than their own, especially when that individual or identity group is not present or otherwise able to represent themselves. A person who rejects the dominant ideology and takes action against oppression out of the belief that eliminating oppression will benefit all people in both privilege and target groups.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of, aversion to, or hatred of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Also: the irrational fear of being labeled by association with or perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; the irrational fear of one's own feelings towards members of the same sex; and the irrational fear of behavior that is outside the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Homophobia is used to reinforce both sexism and heterosexism.

Transphobia: The irrational fear, dislike, or hatred of transgendered people or the fear that one's own gender identity may be questioned.

Heterosexism: A system of advantage which favors heterosexuals. Heterosexism includes institutionalized homophobia and the assumption that being heterosexual is inherently better, more moral, or more natural than being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Like racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, heterosexism awards power to members of the dominant group (straight people / heterosexuals) and denies privilege to members of the subordinate group (lesbians, gay men, and bisexual women and men, etc.)

Cisgender: A term meaning "not transgender," that is, a gender identity or performance in a gender role that society considers to match or be "appropriate" for one's sex. The Latin prefix *cis*- means "on this side of" or "not across". The term was probably created by Carl Buijs, a transsexual man from the Netherlands, in 1995. It originated as a way to shift the focus off of a marginalized group, by defining not only the minority group but also the majority. This is based upon the hypothesis that categorizing everyone will illustrate a difference between equal identities, whereas singling out the minority group implies some deviance, immorality, or defect on the part of the labeled group.

Myths and Realities of Sexual Assault In and Against the Queer and Trans Community:

MYTH 1: Only straight women are survivors; queer folks are never victims of sexual violence. Sexual Violence is more common in heterosexual communities than in queer communities.

REALITY: Queer folks are actually more likely to be sexually assaulted than heterosexual people because of the stigma and homophobia related to their sexual identities. *Bisexual, transgendered, lesbian, and gay people experience violence within their intimate relationships at about the same rates as heterosexuals*¹, and they also may be targeted for sexually assault because of their sexual or gender identities, making rates of sexual harassment and violence higher in and against the queer community than in the heterosexual community. Young queer people are especially targeted for these acts of violence due in part to the idea that they don't know what they want or what they are doing.

STATISTICS:

- *Lesbians and Bisexual girls were significantly more likely than heterosexual girls to be “touched, brushed up against, or cornered in a sexual way (63% as compared to 52% of heterosexual girls) and to be grabbed or have their clothing pulled in a sexual way (50% compared to 44%)*²
- *9 in 10 LGBTQ students have been verbally or physically harassed in the past year because of their physical appearance, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender expression. In contrast, 6 in 10 non-LGBT students have experienced such harassment in the past year.*³
- *According to the First National Survey of Transgender Violence, 14% of respondents were survivors of rape or attempted rape.*⁴

MYTH 2: The perpetrator will always be bigger and stronger; the victim will always be smaller and weaker.

REALITY: Sexual violence and harassment are about power, but not necessarily physical power. Often times sexual assault and harassment is perpetrated by emotional abuse or manipulation, even if the person being

¹ Waldner-Haugrud, 1997; AVP, 1992

² Study conducted by Susan Fineran in Massachusetts

³ 2005 GLSEN School Climate Survey

⁴ “GenderPAC, Gender, Affectional, and Race Equality,” April, 1997. First Annual Survey of Transgender Violence.

assaulted is stronger or bigger. Also the physically “stronger” person can be made vulnerable in many ways, whether it is emotional abuse, being intoxicated, or being otherwise unable to give consent.

MYTH 3: Sexual assault may have “caused” queer people to be queer

REALITY:

- Sexual assault cannot “make someone queer.” Queerness is an important, valid part of who someone is, not a horrible side effect of abuse.
- Many queer and trans identifying youth experience violence and harassment in their own homes due to their sexual orientation and gender identities, causing them to feel as though they are surrounded by hostile environments, sometimes leading to homelessness, dropping out of school, drug problems, or depression. The higher rates of queer survivors stems from the fact that many queer youth are harassed specifically because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

STATISTICS:

- *Over 11% of gay and lesbian youth report being physically attacked by family members often because of sexual orientation.*⁵
- *42% of homeless youth – many of whom have run away from home to escape violence - self-identify as gay/lesbian*⁶
- LGBT persons face additional challenges in healing from sexual assault because their assaults are often not taken seriously due to homophobic or transphobic stigma

MYTH 4: Survivors often provoke the violence done to them; they are getting what they deserve (“look at what ze was wearing; ze was practically asking for it when ze kissed me...”)

REALITY:

- The survivor is *never* to blame for sexual assault. The perpetrator is always responsible for choosing to sexually assault someone, no matter what choices were made by a survivor about dress or behavior. There is no connection between who is raped and what clothes they were wearing. Sexual assault is a traumatic, near death situation. No person would ask for such an attack.

Often the idea that a queer person is “flaunting it” or hitting on straight people is used as a justification for hate crimes as the straight perpetrator may claim that they had no choice but to hurt this person after they made them feel less validated in their straightness, homophobia, and heterosexism.

⁵ Hetrick-Martin Institute, 1988

⁶ Victim Services, 1991

STATISTICS:

- *In 1996, more than 2,500 hate crimes based on sexual orientation were reported—a 6% increase over the year before, even as violent crimes overall declined in America. Lesbians and gays are the most targeted victims of hate crimes. Only 19 states include sexual orientation in their hate crime statutes, much less gender identity.⁷*

MYTH 5: It is easier for a person in a queer relationship to leave hir abusive partner than it is for a heterosexual person to leave their partner.

REALITY:

- Queer relationships have to same level of intimacy, as well as problems and inequalities that exist in as heterosexual relationships.
- In some cases, especially for youth, it may be harder to leave an abusive partner because of feeling isolated, and feeling as though nobody else will ever love or support them.
- It also may be more difficult to get support for queer survivors of relationship violence because of stereotypes that women can't be perpetrators or lack of queer-inclusive services.
- It may be difficult for a queer person to find services without outing themselves and their partners in unsafe, homophobic, and transphobic environments that exist in some domestic violence support programs, etc.

MYTH 6: The majority of child molesters are queer people.

- This is a homophobic stereotype. All forms of sexual assault are about power and control, not sexual desire.

STATISTICS

- *Studies show that over 90% of child molestation is committed by heterosexual men.⁸*

⁷ National Center for Hate Crime Prevention

⁸ US Dept. of Public Health

Moonlight by P.L.

Moonlight on the ocean plays
teasing with its silver'd ways,
touching all that lay below
illuminating – all aglow.

I long to be beside the sea
and have it ever welcome me
Home where I am free
to let go & just be
child, goddess, lover, crone
or simply a woman, fully grown.

The boundaries that hold the sea
are the same applied to me
defined by earth yet not at all
shifting, changing with the rise & fall
of the moon & tides, wind & sun
and cycles of earth not yet begun.

A survivor keeps her secret dark
held close, submerged & hidden far
beneath the surface of the waves
in dim & silent pain-filled caves

Where is my time machine?
Leave my wisdom intact,
take my body back
before the pain & the shame
to know how to say no
when I was 4 years old

A few bubbles here & there
rising to the sun,
A delicate indication
that healing has begun

Issues that Specifically affect Queer and Trans Youth Survivors

Teens may feel that they deserved to be abused if they come from a household or community that does not accept their sexuality or gender identity.

People may not take a queer survivor's identities and disclosures seriously because they view hir sexual orientation or gender identity as "just a phase."

Teens may feel that they don't have anyone to turn to for support if their friends, family, religion, etc. don't accept their sexuality or gender identity. It may also be hard for them to have access to more queer-supportive and inclusive environments if they still live at home.

After disclosing that sexual assault has occurred within a queer relationship the survivor may be blamed for "choosing" to live the "queer lifestyle."

Because of gender stereotypes people may not believe that a guy could be a survivor, or that a woman could be a perpetrator.

Because of racism, queer and trans teens of color may be even less inclined to report their assault for fear that they will further perpetuate stereotypes against their communities or will face harassment from the law enforcement.

Teens may feel that they cannot disclose to adults because their relationship will be trivialized as "puppy love," or blamed because "they shouldn't/don't have sex." Many teens also are afraid to disclose to adults because the little freedom or power they have been allowed may be taken away.

Societal stigma against queerness may make the survivor blame hirself, or cause hir to feel isolated and without support.

The heterosexual bias of society —“everyone is heterosexual, and should be”— contributes to internalized homophobia, invisibility, hiding, and devaluing the identities of queer youth.

The survivor may be in early stages of coming out or not out to others at all and therefore must deal with double disclosure. Fear about doing this could lead to the survivor minimizing the assault in order to avoid exploring hir thoughts about reporting or other aspects of the assault.

The invisibility of queer and trans issues like sexual assault, especially in junior high and high school, leads to increased isolation for survivors.

In addition to dealing with all the diverse feelings of hopelessness, anger, sadness, and self-blame that survivors of sexual assault face, queer and trans survivors may also have had their sexuality or gender identities degraded during the attack.

Due to all these factors and more, LGBTQ teens often feel they have nowhere to turn. This isolation combined with internalized homophobia can lead to deep depression, self-harm, and suicide. LGBTQ youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people. They compromise up to 30 percent of completed youth suicides annually, making suicide the leading cause of death for this group.⁹

⁹ 2005 GLSEN School Climate Survey

How to be an ally in a sexual assault or harassment situation

TIP #1

Speak up when homophobic comments and jokes are made. Let the person know you found this offensive. Calling someone out on verbal harassment may cause them to rethink what they are saying, or prevent physical abuse from ensuing.

TIP #2

Confront your own prejudices, homophobia, and heterosexism. Everyone was socialized with it. Denying that you have it will only keep it around. You can always re-evaluate where you are.

TIP #3

Don't make fun or let your friends make fun of a friend or person who is queer or trans. This makes their identities something to laugh over and ridicule. This only dehumanizes the person more, making them an easier target for a sexual assault.

TIP #4

If you see a queer or trans person looking uncomfortable in a situation and unable to speak up, or having their words or actions ignored, step in and help them get out the situation - don't just stand on the side and see what will happen. If this seems unsafe for you to intervene, call the police or a local rape crisis hotline.

TIP #5

Speak up to homophobic, transphobic, and discriminatory remarks, even if you don't know if there may be a queer or trans person in the room. Not only is there probably a queer or trans person there, but it's important to practice being an ally at all times. It can be easy to be a great ally only when you have someone's expectations to live up to or someone to impress; instead, try to incorporate being an ally into your daily life.

TIP #6

Rethink how you view the world in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Do you assume someone's gender or sexual orientation upon meeting them? This can make the world seem more hostile to a queer or trans person, making them feel as though they have to either live with your false assumptions, or come out every time they meet someone new.

TIP #7

Bring up queer issues in conversations with friends or in discussions in class in order to try to help dissolve the invisibility of queer people. This invisibility often leads people to react in fear and hatred when they are faced with the unfamiliar.

TIP #8

Recognize that people identify in many different ways including: queer, gay, pansexual, bisexual, lesbian, fag, not-straight, curious, questioning, no-identification, transsexual, transgender, ftm, mtf, gender neutral, genderless, etc. All of these identities are valid. None of them are short-term identities, although they may fluctuate for people, as is the nature of gender and sexuality. Don't try to make people name their identities if they are not comfortable with it; sexuality and gender identity are deeply personal, and naming someone for them or as other than how they identify can be disempowering for them.

TIP #9

Recognize that the issues faced by queer and trans survivors of sexual assault are different than heterosexual survivors. Try to educate yourself about what they may be facing, but don't assume that you know what they are going through. Try to get them into contact with an organization that can support them.

TIP #10

Don't minimize the feelings of a queer survivor, or tell them that it's less serious than they may think. The survivor knows how it felt; they may even be attempting to minimize it themselves. Don't make things harder for the survivor by further disempowering them by disrespecting their feelings of violation, fear, anger, or sadness.

TIP #11

Recognize that survivors of sexual assault often go through different processes of coping and surviving through this life-changing experience. Don't expect them to react in any specific way, support them, and give them the room to ask what they need of you.

TIP #12

Be available to have a queer or trans friend talk to you about their relationship if they want to. Don't make them feel as if they must validate or defend their relationship to you; this could make it even harder for them to disclose abuse within their relationship if it is taking place.

A Change in Mood by Erin

“A sudden change in mood,” you say
Yes. I am angry, I’m outraged,
I’m “acting-out,” “lashing-back”

“You don’t smile anymore”
How astute of you to notice.

You never knew that behind the smile, the laugh
my heart pounded, my hands sticky, my eyes shifty
so disconnected
from me
myself

You’re not the only one who’s ever been scared of me,
but I didn’t have the option
of ending my relationship with me,
not that I haven’t tried.

“It’s not that big of a deal”
yeah? then how come I feel like this?
you think you know
who I am, what I’m thinking, feeling
you don’t
you can’t

“I do support you, I just think you’re overreacting”
this doesn’t feel like support to me,
i reach out only to find that you can’t deal with me,
don’t know how to support who I am, what I’ve experienced
instead you laughed with the rest of them,
a smile never cracked my lips.
what was a joke to you
was an attack on me

“Are you straight or gay?”
a familiar question,
still terrifying
once again trapped in a binary.
you laugh, how you enjoy your little joke

Things
not voiced
the yells, screams, and cries
stick in my throat
—as you smile—
so instead I bury myself in
integrals, derivatives, and kinematics
at least there is some reliability there.

Trans Spotlight

In the process of creating this zine I was struck by the lack of information, stories, and voices of trans people. Not only was I greatly disappointed, but also I was also disheartened that almost everything that I found that included trans people in any way was simply through sticking the T at the end of LGB. Gender identity is not the same as sexual orientation. People who deviate from the heterosexual “norms,” and people who don’t fit into the strict gender binaries of male/female face many challenges that are similar, largely due to people’s lack of understanding about the differences in these people’s identities and the struggles that they face. Therefore I am including this “spotlight” section, which specifically focuses in on the challenges faced by those who identify as trans or genderqueer.

Specific Issues:

Due to the invisibility and lack of resources for trans communities and issues, trans youth are especially targeted for harassment as well as not able to find the support that they need in local queer resource centers and/or school clubs that don’t include services needed by trans people.

Because in the media transgendered persons are frequently portrayed as psychotics and criminals, trans survivors often do not receive the support they need and are often blamed for their experiences of violence. In reality the violence is largely not perpetrated by the trans community, but rather against it.

Some trans people engage in sex work or experience homelessness, increasing their risk of sexual violence. Many trans people have these experiences either because it is the only way they have to earn money as they are unable to find and maintain employment because of their gender expression, or because they were kicked out of their homes at a young age.

Because of our culture’s investment in gender and sexuality conformity, all individuals who deviate slightly from “gender norms” risk violence of any form.

Societal discomfort with transgenderism has rendered transgendered survivors of sexual assault, gay-bashing, and domestic violence without necessary services. Many Rape Crisis Centers and domestic violence shelters are unprepared to address the issues of transgendered people.

Many trans survivors feel as though they are unable to get medical attention or take legal action. Medical personnel have been known to respond with judgment and withhold care to people they perceive to be cross-dressing. The criminal justice and the legal systems often re-traumatize victims and don't prosecute cases involving trans survivors appropriately.

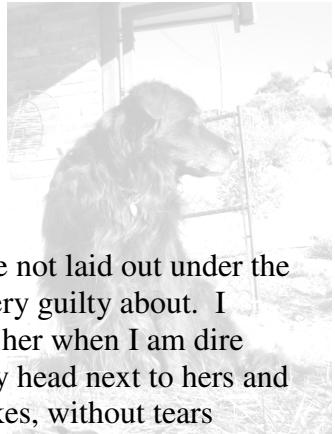
Many trans survivors find it hard to find counseling that can support them in their experiences as many counselors, even if they are accepting of transgender persons, are gravely under-educated about trans issues.

Sexual assault before a trans person's transition can make it hard to discuss assault after transition, due to fear of outing oneself and being discriminated against, being further hurt, or not receiving proper care. People may also not believe or validate the experiences of the survivor.

Privileges Held By Non-Trans (Cisgender) Identifying People

- Validity as a man/woman/human is not based upon how much surgery you've had, if you take hormones, or how well you "pass" as a non-trans person.
- People do not disrespect you by using incorrect pronouns even after they've been corrected.
- You do not have to worry about whether you will be able to find a bathroom to use, or whether you will be safe changing in a locker or dressing room.
- If you get pulled over by police or have to present your driver's license, you don't have to worry about the consequences if the officer notices the "F" or "M" on the ID. If you're traveling abroad, you don't have to worry about being detained because your appearance doesn't "match" the gender on your passport.
- When you go to the gym or public pool, you can use the showers.
- If you end up in the emergency room, you don't have to worry that your gender will keep you from receiving appropriate treatment.
- You are not required to undergo extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.
- If you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or otherwise not heterosexual you can go to your local support organization without the fear of being turned away for lack of services for people like yourself.

My Name By Rian



Tonight I had a conversation with my dog. I have not laid out under the stars with her in a long time... something I feel very guilty about. I sometimes feel that recently I have only turned to her when I am dire need of a shoulder to cry on. But tonight I laid my head next to hers and gently scratched behind her ears just where she likes, without tears already welling in my eyes, and without the desperate need for comfort that I could not receive or accept from my fellow humans. Tonight, as she made contented little growls and she licked my ears and face, she told me nothing more than the simple "I love you." This simple fact is something that is so significant, so unusual, and so freeing. You may say, "big deal, your dog loves you. So what." But for me, it has meant everything. To her I have always been someone worthwhile. She was my first ally. My first supporter who did not need to question what I said, or in doing so question her own belief in me. She let me cry without judgment. She let me feel the pain of my sexual assault. She stayed true through the ridicule and nastiness that seemed to be flying at me from all environments. She continued to wag her tail at the sight of me even after I whispered to her in hushed tones, "I think I like girls," even after I asked, "Will you use male pronouns when you are thinking of me from now on?"

Tonight I told her something I had not dared to utter aloud to anyone, not even her, my most caring companion. I leaned over and whispered to her, "I know that you've always known me by a different name... but really my name is Rian. It is my chosen name. Rian is that little boy you knew when we were both so young. I am sorry that I became distracted, as we grew older and no longer could play with you everyday, or go on adventures into the underbrush. I'm sorry. But you have known me. I believe you have known me as Rian longer than anyone else."

IMPRESSIONZ

By Kayla Barnes

Rarely but on occasion i hear these conversations,
saying "that's so gay" like they were connotations.

take things offensive but i don't say a word,
silenced by fear may just be the worst.

Passing these faces in pep rallys and hallways,
laughing together saying we'll be friends always.

in fact, this is in no way true you see,
how can we be friends if you cant accept me for me?

see, im locked in a box lost without a key,
society holds me in this box not to represent me.

If i step out i could lose a lot in my lifetime,
why? cuz society reinforces these hate crimes.
just look at statistics compared to all the religions,
and see hate crimes is being more than witnessed.

faced with difficult choices and decisions,
i thinks it's time for all of us to grow up and listen.
Once had these dreams that played like movie scenes,
creating vivid pictures of things im not use to seeing.

can't lose it but things are coming out,
clearly they are things that i don't know about.
never realized the pain behind oppression,
until i went to CLI n had my first lesson.
and that was motivation, now im all for social change,
and its clear that i'll never be the same.

now i can take this knowledge and make my voice heard,
might as well take the chance, it cant get any worse.
behind all oppression there's animosity and tears,
time to make allies out of friends family and peers.
and when i sleep things come to me in dreams,
and i open my eyes and envision these things.

Vision

It is crucial to recognize and face the realities of oppression that are so ingrained in our society today. Yet, as we recognize what is wrong, unjust, and hurtful to people, we must also look forward and envision a world that we can hope to live in and create. Without these visions for the future, how can we truly work to change society? We need to know what we want our social structure to look like in order to both deconstruct the wrongs, and construct inclusive and progressive communities.

So what do I envision, and how do I see this coming to take place? I dream of a world where heterosexism, homophobia, racism, classism, sexism, and ableism, are not ignored to make people feel that they don't exist, but where they are looked at head-on and efforts are made on societal and institutional levels to develop new methods of inclusion.

No longer will "tolerance" be used when talking about diversity, as if it is merely enough to deal with the fact that these people exist without really seeing them as equals. Rather, "inclusion" and "social justice" will be embraced with the rise of the new voices being voiced and heard.

The complexity of issues facing any one oppressed community can only be addressed by broad changes in the delivery system and extensive education regarding the needs of the community. Therefore I ask you to raise your voice, have your experiences heard, find community, provide support, and most importantly educate yourself and others.

Resources

Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center:

433 E. Cañón Perdido St
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805)564-3696 Hotline
(805)963-6832 Office
www.sbrapecrisiscenter.org

Pacific Pride Foundation:

South County Office
126 E. Haley St. Suite A-1
Phone: (805) 963-3636
Fax: (805) 963-9086
www.pacificpridefoundation.org

R.A.I.N.

(Rape of Youth & Incest National Network Hotline)

Automatically connects the caller to a Rape Crisis Center in her/his area based on the caller's area code.

800-656-4673
www.rainn.org

FORGE

(For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression)

A national education, advocacy and support umbrella organization supporting female-to-male transsexuals and transgenderists, and others who were assigned female at birth but who have some level of masculine identification and SOFFAs (Significant Others, Family, Friends and Allies).

www.forge-forward.org/index.php

Transgender and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP)

An organization that works to challenge and end the human rights abuses committed against transgender, gender variant/genderqueer and intersex (TGI) people in California prisons and beyond.

1095 Market St. Suite 308
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